Parliamentarians for East Timor
244A Upper Street, London N1 1RU

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From Lord Avebury

CDPM
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April 4, 1990

Dear Senator Evans,

Congratulations on your reappointment as Foreign Minister.

I was delighted to see a press release from your Department on the Lithuanian declaration of independence, in which you were quoted as saying:

> *Australia has already recognised for many years the legal right of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to exist as independent states. Like many other Western governments we have refused to accept in international law the incorporation of the three Baltic states into the Soviet Union in 1940, rejecting the self-proclaimed Soviet sovereignty over them.*
>
> *Australia thus recognises that the declaration represents the aspirations of the Lithuanian people to achive economic and political independence through peaceful and democratic means.*

It is indeed wonderful to see the people of the Baltic states reasserting their right to self-determination after 50 years of Soviet occupation, and it is right that we should give them every encouragement.

But why do you deny the same privilege to your small neighbour, East Timor, occupied for 15 years, and still crushed beneath the jackboot of Jakarta?

It surely cannot be that you believe the people of East Timor are reconciled to being a Javanese colony. The demonstrations by a few brave Timorese during the visits by His Holiness the Pope, and the US Ambassador to Jakarta, showed that the desire for independence animates the people of Dili as much as the people of Vilnius.

Nor can you say that after 15 years, we have to accept Indonesia's occupation of East Timor as a fait accompli. International law does not allow states to acquire a valid title to lands forcibly annexed, merely by the lapse of time. You are right when you emphasis that the Soviet Union has no better right to be in the Baltic states today than in 1940.

You applaud the policies of the freely elected Parliament of Lithuania. Will you now insist that free elections are held in East Timor, under United Nations supervision, so that the people of East Timor may have the same right to determine their political future as the people of the Baltic states, in accordance with Article 1 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of which Australia is a signatory?

Yours sincerely,

Eric Avebury

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